

CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims to the application.

1. (currently amended) Individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprising cellulose fibers reacted with an effective amount of an α -hydroxy polycarboxylic acid crosslinking agent in the presence of from about 0.1% to about 2.6% of the weight of the cellulosic fiber of a C₄-C₁₂ polyol and at a temperature of from 185°C to about 215°C to form intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers characterized by Whiteness Index, (WI_{CDM-L}) greater than about 69.73 and an L value greater than about 94.5 ~~and wherein said Whiteness Index (WI_{CDM-L}) of said fibers is measured after curing at a temperature of from 185°C to 215°C.~~

2. (canceled)

3. (original) The fibers of claim 1 having an *a* value greater than about -1.55 and less than about -0.60.

4. (original) The fibers of claim 1 having a *b* value less than about 8.50.

5. (canceled)

6. (previously presented) The fibers of claim 1 wherein the α -hydroxy polycarboxylic crosslinking agent is selected from the group consisting of malic acid, tartaric acid, citric acid, tartronic acid, α -hydroxyglutaric acid, and citramalic acid and mixtures thereof.

7. (original) The fibers of claim 6 wherein the crosslinking agent is citric acid.

8. (original) The fibers of claim 6 wherein the crosslinking agent is malic acid.

9. (original) The fibers of claim 6 wherein the crosslinking agent is tartaric acid.

10. (original) The fibers of claim 1 wherein the polyol is selected from the group consisting of acyclic polyols, alicyclic polyols, and heterosides and mixtures thereof.

11. (original) The fibers of claim 10 wherein the acyclic polyol is selected from the group consisting of erythritol, xylitol, arabinitol, ribitol, sorbitol, mannitol, perseitol and volemitol and mixtures thereof.

12. (original) The fibers of claim 11 wherein the acyclic polyol is sorbitol.

13. (original) The fibers of claim 10 wherein the alicyclic polyol is myo-inositol.

14. (original) The fibers of claim 10 wherein the heteroside is maltitol.

15. The fibers of claim 10 wherein the heteroside is lactitol.

16. (original) The fibers of claim 1 having a brightness greater than about 79.0% ISO.

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (previously presented) The fibers of claim 1 wherein the polyol is present from about 0.1% to about 2.0% of the weight of cellulose fiber

20. (previously presented) The fibers of claim 1 wherein the wet bulk is 16 cc/g or greater.